

MIMH Fact Sheet



School of Medicine
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Missouri Institute of Mental Health

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Trauma Among People with Mental Illness, Substance Use Disorders and/or Developmental Disabilities

Research on trauma demonstrates that many individuals with mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities have experienced a traumatic event. Traumatic events—emotionally distressing events outside the range of normal human experience—can include child abuse, sexual assault, military combat, domestic violence, and a host of other violent incidents. Although many recover from their traumatic experiences, some develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or other clinically impairing disorders. Trauma can result in one being more vulnerable to other mental illnesses or substance use disorders, and conversely, mental illness and substance use disorders increase the risk of trauma. Regardless of the onset or origin of the psychological trauma, mental illness or substance use disorder, professionals in the mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities fields are becoming more cognizant of the scope of these comorbid problems and how they complicate treatment. Individuals with a history of trauma are more likely to have a substance use disorder, have more severe psychiatric symptoms, and use more costly psychiatric services.

National Prevalence

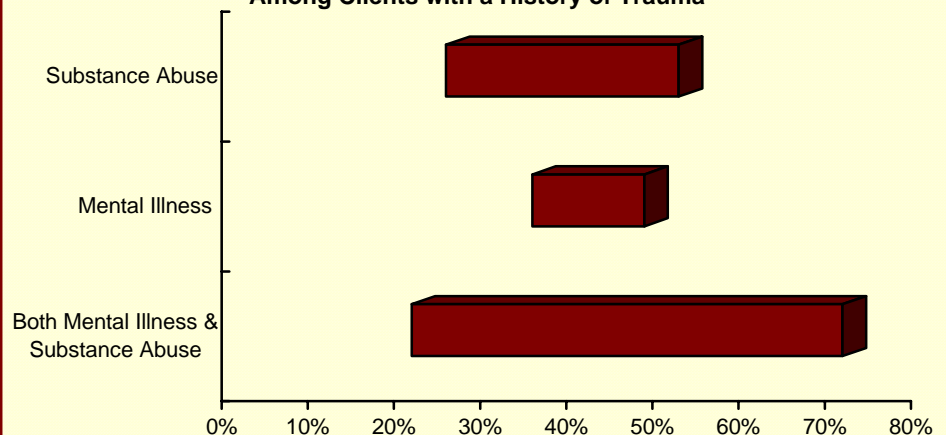
- Between 34% and 53% of people with a severe mental illness report childhood physical/sexual abuse.¹⁻⁴
- The National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) found that 59% of men with PTSD and 44% of women with PTSD met criteria for 3 or more psychiatric diagnoses, other than PTSD.⁵
- A study conducted in an urban mental health center found that 94% of clients had a history of trauma and 42% had PTSD.⁶
- Estimates of lifetime exposure to interpersonal violence in persons with severe mental illness are between 43% and 81%.⁷⁻¹¹
- A large Vietnam veteran study found that 98.9% of those diagnosed with PTSD also had at least one other psychiatric disorder.¹²
- Overall, studies estimate that 30-60% of treatment-seeking substance abusers have PTSD.^{13, 14}
- A survey of patients in a substance abuse treatment program found that 43% of women and 12% of men met criteria for PTSD.¹³ A similar study in a more urban and impoverished area found an average of 59% of patients met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD.¹⁵

- Studies among veterans seeking treatment for PTSD have found rates of substance-related disorders from 44% to 91%.¹⁶⁻¹⁸
- A Center for Substance Abuse Treatment publication states that as many as two-thirds of women and men in treatment for substance abuse report experiencing childhood abuse or neglect.¹⁹
- One study of 50,278 children enrolled in a Nebraska school system established a 9% prevalence rate of abuse and neglect for non-disabled children and a 31% prevalence rate for the disabled children.²⁰

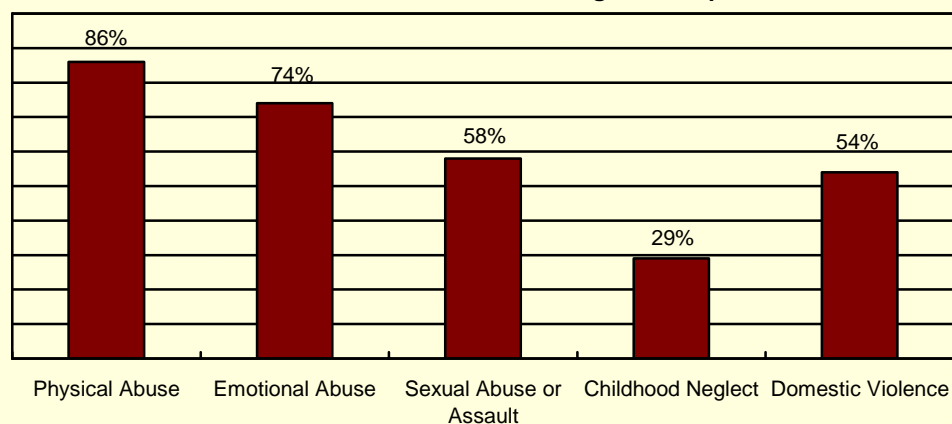
Missouri Prevalence

- A 2000 study conducted in Southwest Missouri found that approximately 20% of women entering mental health or substance abuse treatment facilities could be triple-diagnosed with a mental illness, substance use disorder, and a history of trauma. 70-85% of these women reported a previous mental health or substance abuse treatment episode within the past 5 years.²¹
- A review of clinical records at a Southwest Missouri substance abuse treatment facility and domestic violence shelter showed that 47% of women served by the facility had co-occurring mental illness, substance use disorders, and a history of trauma.²¹

**Ranges of Mental Illness & Substance Abuse Prevalence Rates
Among Clients with a History of Trauma²¹**



Traumatic Experiences in a Southwest Missouri Treatment Program Sample ²⁰



- ◆ A review of 15,681 Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH) substance abuse treatment client assessments from 2000 to 2002 found 40% reported lifetime physical abuse, and 25% reported lifetime sexual abuse.²²
- ◆ A Missouri statewide sample of clients seeking inpatient and out-patient substance abuse treatment, found that 64% of women and 16% of men reported being physically or sexually abused. These clients with a history of trauma were roughly 30% more likely to have a history of psychiatric treatment as well.²³

Implications for Treatment

Research indicates that treatment outcomes are poor for people with a history of trauma. PTSD is associated with one of the highest rates of service use and likely the highest per-capita cost of any mental illness.¹ PTSD is also associated with higher rates of relapse after substance abuse treatment and heavier substance use.²⁴ Co-occurring PTSD and substance use is linked to an increased rate of recidivism and inpatient treatment episodes.^{13, 25-27} Trauma is

associated with high use of non-mental health services as well. An HMO study reported substantial increases in healthcare costs among patients who reported experiencing childhood trauma.²⁸

Due to the poor treatment outcomes reported for mental health and substance abuse clients with a history of trauma, researchers and treatment providers are seeking to find the best method for helping these dually diagnosed clients. Studies suggest that dually treating substance abuse and PTSD reduces the rate of relapse over treating substance abuse alone.²⁹ Several states have reported treatment success after implementing programs to assess and treat trauma along with the mental health and/or substance use disorder. At present, a large, multi-site Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration funded project is evaluating the integration of services for the dual- and triple-diagnosed. Given the prevalence of trauma among people with mental illness and substance use disorders, treatment systems should assume that all clients are potentially trauma survivors and treat them accordingly.

◆ Incidence of Violence ◆

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, during 1999 over 27,000 violent crimes occurred in Missouri. Physical and sexual assaults accounted for almost 20,000 of those crimes.

Specific to domestic violence, the Missouri State Highway Patrol reported 37,898 incidents of domestic violence in 2000. However, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that only about half of domestic violence incidents are reported to the police.

Key Findings from the Violence Against Women Survey indicate that:

- ◆ 1 out of 6 women and 1 out of 33 men have been the victims of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. 54% of the women disclosing attempted or completed rape report that the assault occurred before the age of 18.
- ◆ 25 % of surveyed women and 8 % of surveyed men said they had been raped and/or physically assaulted by a romantic partner or date.
- ◆ 52% of women reported being physically assaulted during their lifetime.
- ◆ 8% of surveyed women and 2% of surveyed men said that they were stalked in their lifetime.

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